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ABSTRACT

Portfolios are an effective way to get students to invest in their learning, and to show how students' learning improves or changes over time. This paper provides examples of portfolio assessment in teacher education programs to demonstrate that portfolios are useful assessment tools providing an ongoing database for documenting and monitoring student progress throughout a program. Examples of the use of portfolio assessment are described from Saginaw Valley State University (Michigan), SUNY Plattsburgh (New York), Central Washington University, and Jacksonville State University (Alabama). Findings from the investigation reveal that the design of portfolios and their purposes vary, though the primary intent is to authentically and accurately represent student performance. However, there is concern about using portfolios as the sole assessment tool. Finally, five key factors are identified that must be considered whenever portfolios are used: (1) originality; (2) transferability; (3) authenticity; (4) opportunity; and (5) time and commitment. Examples of portfolio information sheets and criteria are appended. (Contains 17 references.) (ND)

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PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: A WAY TO AUTHENTICALLY MONITOR PROGRESS AND EVALUATE TEACHER PREPARATION

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Introduction

Accurate and beneficial assessment and measurement of performance has always been a major concern of educators. States, schools and school districts, colleges and universities, the nation itself, all measure in some form or fashion the learning levels of students as they move through the various stages of education, whether they are in the grades (e.g., K-12) or in college/university courses or programs. Additionally, accrediting bodies expect that such measurement is done consistently and uniformly, and decisions for curriculum change are made based on deficiencies reflected by the measuring instruments. The most established mechanism by which this assessment occurs is through some form of standardized measurement.

At issue, especially for teachers and faculty, is that standardized instruments may not accurately measure what students learn or are taught. Also at issue is how "authentically" a standardized instrument measures the relationship between classroom performance and performance in the "real" situation. The parameters of the issue have been addressed quite eloquently in the scholarly literature (see, for example Costa, 1989; Shepard, 1989; Bracey, 1994; Wiggins, 1993; 1989; Feuer & Fulton, 1993; Stiggins, 1991; Worthen, 1993).

To more closely approximate "real" performance, some K-12 classroom teachers, states, and college/university teacher preparation programs are beginning to use portfolio assessment to document learning and growth in learning over time. The belief is that portfolio assessment is a more authentic way of evaluating and establishing student

progress throughout the learning process. In addition, those who use portfolios believe that they provide information that shows the articulation between classroom performance and performance in "real" situations.

There are concerns, however, with portfolio assessment. One major concern is time; it takes time to review portfolios and furnish worthwhile feedback. A second concern, related to the first is that of reliability and validity. Due to the difficulty of establishing instrument reliability, and validity, many believe that the reliability and validity of portfolios is tenuous at best. Such issues have been discussed quite thoroughly in the scholarly literature (see, for example, Linn, 1991; Barton & Collins, 1993; Abruscato, 1993; Popham, 1993; Feuer & Fulton, 1993; Gellman, 1992-1993).

There is, however, a growing number that see portfolios as one of the best ways to get students to invest in their learning, and to provide an adequate portrayal of how students' learning improves or changes over time. Farr and Tone (1994), for instance, state that it is important to view portfolio assessment as a shared student/teacher responsibility which allows both formal and informal methods of evaluating students' academic progress. Additionally, several writers have pointed out the need to use multiple methods and measures in developing an 'assessment portfolio' which combines both quantitative and qualitative aspects of students' work (see, for example, Nolet, 1992; Gamel-McCormick, 1993; Keefe, 1995). Farr and Tone (1994) also stress that student portfolios should be "working" portfolios which include language that the student 'needs and wants to apply' and should not be "show" portfolios which are merely a reflection of a student's "best" work.

Addressing, specifically, the assessment of teacher competence, Gellman (1992-1993) claims:

> It is abundantly clear that teaching is too complex an activity to be assessed with tests alone. Tests may be adequate for the evaluation of some of the knowledge that is a necessary component of effective teaching but we need additional assessment techniques to determine whether that knowledge is reflected in appropriate teaching behavior (p. 39).

It seems, therefore, that alternative assessment procedures may be necessary. We suggest that portfolio assessment be given serious consideration.

Portfolio Assessment in Practice

The balance of this paper will provide examples that represent the manner in which portfolio assessment is used in the graduate and undergraduate education programs in the various institutions we represent. The main purpose is to demonstrate that portfolios are useful assessment tools which provide an ongoing database for documenting and monitoring student progress throughout a program.

1. Saginaw Valley State University

In the Department of Teacher Education at Saginaw Valley State University, portfolios have become an important assessment tool for establishing readiness for entrance to programs and monitoring progress as students move through their programs.

At the undergraduate level, portfolios are maintained in the Office of Clinical Experiences for any student who has satisfactorily completed all prerequisites for admission to a teacher preparation program and, subsequently, has been admitted. Faculty in each methods-type course designate specific assignments to be included in the portfolios. Assignments to be included vary according to program, but typically are units completed for a course and lessons taught in fieldwork placements; additionally, supervisory evaluations of teaching and course grades are included. Portfolios are used specifically to monitor progress through a program and for admission to student teaching. Students have the option to take their portfolios with them on completion of student teaching; portfolios not claimed by students are discarded. The variety of information included in an undergraduate portfolio is attached. See Attachments A through D.

At the graduate level, portfolios are used to determine admission to a master's level program in teacher education, and to monitor progress through that program. Students are expected to maintain their portfolios and submit them in a timely manner. Unlike the undergraduate portfolios which have all information to be included designated by the faculty, the master's level portfolios have required information as well as "student choice" information. An example of the requirements for the graduate portfolios and the evaluation form used by faculty are attached. See Attachments E and F.

In addition to the portfolios that are required by programs, certain courses also base course evaluations and grades on portfolios. Students in such courses seem at first surprised that they will be expected to maintain a portfolio and review it at specified times

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during the semester; however, by the end of a course common comments are "it has been really helpful to watch my progression" and "the portfolio has been an excellent mechanism for me to keep all of my coursework together in a structured way. Usually all of my 'stuff' from a course is scattered here and their and eventually is lost."

2. SUNY-Plattsburgh

At SUNY-Plattsburgh, the Reading Center has a developed a "new" portfolio assessment format for use by children and teachers working in a university setting. The main aims of this literacy portfolio are to ensure that children have the opportunity to become proficient and realistic in the self-assessment of their own educational progress and enable them to present a wide variety of their academic and artistic accomplishments in literacy and language.

The literacy portfolio developed and used in the Reading Center at SUNY-Plattsburgh includes these features and consists of three major components: (1) the ongoing work of the children; (2) the educational planning of the teacher; and (3) the concerns and interests of the parents or caregivers. In this way, the literacy portfolio serves both as a broad-based assessment of student achievement in a classroom setting and as a monitoring instrument for the pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

A typical SUNY Reading Center literacy portfolio contains the following data:

1. The student's work, consisting of:

   (a) samples of actual classroom activities

(b) formal tests results (usually from the student's school)

(c) informal test results (from the Reading Center)

(d) interest inventories

(e) "getting to know you" questionnaires and background sheets

(f) journal entries

2. The teacher's planning, consisting of:

(a) a statement of teaching philosophy/objectives

(b) lesson plans

(c) journal entries

(d) previous case study reports

(e) checklists of literacy needs

3. The parents' input, consisting of:

(a) surveys of the student's needs

(b) the student's medical history

(c) feedback information for the teacher

(d) signed permission slips for possible field trips, photos, use of data, etc.

3. Central Washington University

At Central Washington University faculty are involved in an ongoing dialogue about the validity and reliability of portfolios as an assessment tool. The debate focusses primarily on the type of assessment portfolio falls into, i.e., content,

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performance, attitudinal (affective). Faculty argue constantly about this, and there has been no resolution. Questions abound. Is it performance or content? Is it valid or reliable? How do you control for cheating on portfolios? Faculty in the secondary program and those in the teacher preparation colleges seem not at all interested. The faculty in the elementary program view student teaching as the best form of performance assessment.

4. Jacksonville State University

At Jacksonville State, the closest we get to a portfolio-type of assessment tool is a student teaching notebook. All student teachers are required to maintain a quality notebook with the following sections: (1) a journal with daily entries; (2) a reflection journal with periodic entries; (3) observations and evaluations completed by the university supervisor; (4) lesson plans and curriculum materials related to the lessons; (5) at least two bulletin board designs; (6) additional materials related to school operations and functions. The notebook is monitored by the university supervisor. The main purpose of the notebook is to determine maturation as a teacher during the student teaching experience.

Conclusion

There appears to be some variation in the design of portfolios and the purposes for which they are used; however, it seems the primary intent is to authentically and accurately represent student performance. There also is concern, though, about using portfolios as the sole assessment tool. This concern may be appropriate in that analysis of portfolios

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can lean to the subjective. The writers believe, however, that when a set of standard criteria are uniformly applied, portfolios provide a wealth of information for decision-making about curriculum and student progress.

In order, though, for portfolios to provide the necessary information, we suggest that the following five factors are critical and need to be considered whenever portfolios are used. These include (1) originality, (2) transferability, (3) authenticity, (4) opportunity, and (5) time and commitment.

1. Originality: Some of the student's entries in a portfolio should be performed in the classroom under the supervision of the teacher or an instructor. This will help to ensure that the portfolio entries are a realistic sample of the student's work.
2. Transferability: The assessment of the student's work should attempt to indicate an achievement level of an acceptable standard that can be recognized across disciplines.
3. Authenticity: The student should be able to reproduce the level of achievement exemplified in the portfolio, in other situations requiring the same type of work.
4. Opportunity: Wherever possible, all students should have the chance to present their work in similar formats, and their assessment should not be disadvantaged by the lack of finances or resources.
5. Time and Commitment: It takes time on the part of both students and faculty to appropriately assess and maintain a quality portfolio. Additionally, it takes a commitment to the ongoing process of review and maintenance. Typically, portfolios are "works in progress" and need to be viewed as such.

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ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

Name _____ Semester _____

Course _____

Field Experience School _____

Grade level of students with which you worked _____

Type of experience: (circle one) Urban Suburban Rural

Have you had prior field experiences? Yes No If yes, how many? ___

Types of experiences: (circle all that apply)

team planning team teaching

individual planning individual teaching

In being evaluated for your experiance, check those that apply:

____ audio taping ____ video taping

____ debriefing w/supervisor

In preparing for your experience and implementing your assignment, check the following experiences in which you were involved:

____ writing daily lesson plans ____ formally evaluating students

____ writing unit plans

Added information:

a. Overview paragraph explaining field assignment.

b. (see attached sheet) One paragraph about each field day.
   1. date, time
   2. teaching responsibilities
   3. other

c. Summary paragraph explaining your perception of your field experience in terms of teaching and what you learned.

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d. (see attached sheet) Example of field work assignment.

Semester _____

Attachment B

PORTFOLIO INFORMATION

TE _____ _____
Course Title

Name _____ Instructor: _____

Semester: _____

Field Placement - Location

____ Urban
____ Suburban
____ Rural

Field Placement - Grouping

____ Individual
____ Pairs
____ Groups of 3 or more

Field Placement - Grade(s)

circle appropriate grade(s)

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Information Included:

1. Unit Outline: ____ Yes ____ No
2. Example of Lesson Taught in Field Placement: ____ Yes ____ No
3. Student's Overall Analysis of Field Experience: ____ Yes ____ No
4. Host Teacher's Final Evaluation: ____ Yes ____ No
5. Field Supervisor's Evaluation: ____ Yes ____ No

Probable success in future field experiences (based on field work in this course).

____ Superior
____ Above Average
____ Average
____ Below Average

Field Grade _____

Course Grade _____

Correction Plan: ____ Yes ____ No

Comments:

_____
SVSU Faculty Signature

_____
SVSU Student Signature

Signatures indicate that both parties have discussed the information on this document. Signatures do not mean that both parties agree with the contents and the comments.

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PORTFOLIO INFORMATION

TE 302: GENERAL METHODS FOR TEACHING IN SECONDARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Instructor: [redacted]

Semester: _____

Portfolio Information for: _____

Major: _____ Course Grade: _____

Minor: _____

Field Placement:

Junior High/Middle School: _____

High School: _____

Location:

Urban: _____

Rural: _____

Suburban: _____

Information Included:

1. Example of Lesson Taught in Field Placement: Yes ___; No ___
2. Student's Overall Analysis of Field Experience: Yes ___; No ___
3. Host Teacher's Final Evaluation: Yes ___; No ___
4. Field Supervisor's Evaluation: Yes ___; No ___

Probable success in future field experiences (based on TE 302):

Superior: ___

Above Average: ___

Average: ___

Below Average: ___

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Semester _____

PORTFOLIO INFORMATION

Attachment D

TE 308: Advanced Methods for Teaching in the Secondary and Middle Schools
TE 312: Teaching Reading in the Content Areas of Secondary and Middle Schools

Instructors: _____

_____

PORTFOLIO INFORMATION FOR:

Social Security Number: ___/___/____ Major: _____ Minor: _____

FIELD PLACEMENT:

Middle School: _____

High School: _____

LOCATION:

Urban: _____

Rural: _____

Suburban: _____

TE 308/312 FIELD WORK

FINAL EVALUATION

Rapport with Students

Lesson Design

Lesson Delivery

Classroom Management

Professionalism

Oral and Written Language

Portfolio

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Field Work Grade:

TE 308 Course Grade:

TE 312 Course Grade:

PROBABLE SUCCESS IN FUTURE FIELD EXPERIENCES (based on TE 308-312):

Superior: _____ Above Average: _____ Average: _____

Portfolio Requirements
MAT in Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary Classroom Teaching

The requirements for the Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary Classroom Teaching Portfolio are set down in the following. The Portfolio will be used by the advisor for determining graduation to full completion of your MAT program. Please read all requirements carefully. If you have any questions, contact your Program Advisor as soon as possible.

1. Purpose of the Portfolio

a. The purpose of the portfolio is to provide graded examples of your best work from each class completed throughout your MAT program. Materials to be included will encompass an academic base, a philosophical base, and any clinical/field-based activities. Your Portfolio will exhibit your progress through your program, and will incorporate examples of theory (the academic and philosophical), but, also, theory into practice (the clinical/field-based activities).

b. The Department of Teacher Education believes that a teacher's major role is that of a Decision Maker, both in the classroom and in the school. Teachers make decisions in what the Department refers to as "contexts." There are three "contexts", the body of knowledge context, the holistic/student-centered context, and the social setting context. Explanations of these contexts must be provided throughout your portfolio.

Your portfolio needs to emphasize the "teacher as a decision-maker" and provide evidence of "decision making" in each of the contexts:

The concept of Teacher as a Decision-Maker in the three contexts will be addressed throughout your program.

c. It is necessary to maintain a quality portfolio because the portfolio will be used by the elementary, middle school, and secondary faculty to determine the following:
   1. whether you have the academic ability to be successful in an MAT program.
   2. to provide an ongoing record of coursework in terms of the Teacher as a Decision-Maker in the three contexts.
   3. to assess satisfactory and acceptable progress during your MAT program as outlined in the appropriate SVSU catalog and in the program checklist.

2. General Requirements for the Portfolio

a. Your portfolio is to be submitted in a three-ring binder;
b. Your name and MAT program are to be displayed clearly on the spine.
c. You need to have tabbed dividers clearly identifying each section.

3. Arrangement of the Portfolio

Portfolios are to be arranged in the following order:
a. A signed and dated cover letter allowing program faculty to review your portfolio.
b. Table of Contents
c. Two to three page (typed, double-spaced) evaluation of the contents of the portfolio

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written by the individual. Your portfolio will be evaluated a number of times throughout your program; all evaluations are to be in this section.

d. Two to three pages (typed, double-spaced) statement of philosophy which explains what you expect to gain from your MAT program. Your statement should include a listing of goals you hope to accomplish during the program.

e. Letters of recommendation which address competence in your area of concentration from two (2) professional educators with whom you have worked.

f. Letters of recommendation which address competence or potential competence in your area of study from two (2) faculty members.

g. Samples of graduate coursework.
Samples should consist of some or all of the following:
   1. selected, graded examples of "best" coursework from each class taken;
   2. photographs of three-dimensional objects from your classroom (which have been developed as a result of your coursework) with an explanation;
   3. video or audio-tapes of classroom applications of coursework;
   4. descriptions/explanations of any relevant activities (with examples) that are a result of taking a course in the MAT program but not directly related to a specific course in the MAT program.

h. Other materials that have been approved by your advisor.

i. One-page summaries for each graduate course taken that addresses a topic (or topics) from the course that may serve as an action research project in the Capstone Seminar.

j. Copies of student transcripts of graduate studies. Should include a transcript from SVSU and transcripts from other universities (if any).

k. Signed MAT program checklist. Needs to be up-to-date and have been reviewed by your advisor. Include copies of any waiver/substitution forms.

4. Submission of the Portfolio.

Portfolios must be submitted three times:

a. By the eighth week of the semester in which you complete your third course (nine credits) in your program.

b. By the eighth week of the semester in which you complete your sixth course (eighteen credits) in your program.

c. By the eighth week of the semester preceding the one in which you plan to enroll in the Capstone Seminar.

d. Failure to submit the portfolio in a timely manner may interfere with a timely completion of your program.

e. You need to submit your portfolio to your program advisor.

5. You are responsible for maintaining your Portfolios and submitting it on time.

Special Note: If you are changing from a teacher certification program to an MAT program, you need to contact your advisor immediately to make arrangements to submit your portfolio.

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Portfolio Evaluation

Elementary, Middle School, Secondary Classroom Teaching

To the student:

Your portfolio should be submitted to your advisor, for review, at least three times. The submission schedule is included with the Portfolio Requirements. You received this when you were admitted to begin taking graduate courses toward earning an MAT in Elementary, Middle School, or Secondary Classroom Teaching. Please become familiar with the portfolio requirements, and submit your portfolio in a timely manner.

When submitting your portfolio, several areas are important. These include the following:

1. Your evaluation of the portfolio

   This needs to be two to three pages long (typed, double-spaced). You need to do this evaluation each time you submit your portfolio.

   Each evaluation needs to focus at how well you believe the contents of your portfolio reflect a "teacher as a decision-maker" in each of the three contexts, i.e., body of knowledge, holistic/student-centered, social.
   Be specific!

2. Your statement of philosophy

   This needs to be two to three pages (typed, double-spaced) and address what you expect to gain from your MAT program. You need to include a list of goals you want to focus at and accomplish. Your portfolio evaluation (see #1 above) should reflect progress toward accomplishing those goals.

3. Sample of your graduate coursework

   This should be examples of what you believe to be your "best" work from each course taken. A brief (one or two paragraph) explanation of why you have included each item needs to be at the beginning of this section. The explanation is to address the scholarship and quality represented by each example. Be specific!

4. One-page summaries

   These summaries (one from each class completed) will help you select a project when you enroll in the capstone course.

5. Additional Information

   Any additional information should be included only if it improves the quality of the portfolio in the sense that it (i.e., the additional information) either enhances the course work material that you include or represents expansion of that material. You should check with your advisor before including material not related specifically to coursework. Also, include a brief explanation (one to two paragraphs) detailing why the information has been put into the Portfolio.

6. Up-to-date, signed MAT program checklist

7. You are responsible for maintaining your Portfolio and submitting it on time.

   Your portfolio is to be submitted at least three times (see item #4 under Portfolio Requirements). In the event there is a deficiency, you will be expected to correct the deficiency and resubmit the portfolio within three weeks. Any deficiencies should be discussed with your advisor.

8. It is recommended that you meet with your advisor soon after beginning your program to discuss portfolio requirements and to review your MAT program.

Good luck and enjoy your program!

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Student: _____

Faculty Reviewer: _____

Date: _____

FACULTY PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT
MAT in Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary Classroom Teaching

Attachment F

Assessment Criteria	Rating (Check one)		Comments (if any)
	Acceptable	Unacceptable	
1. Portfolio reflects "Teacher As A Decision Maker."			
2. Portfolio meets the general requirements.			
3. Portfolio is arranged appropriately.			
4. Student's evaluation of the portfolio.			
5. Student's statement of philosophy.			
6. Letters of recommendation.			
7. Samples of "best" work from each course completed.			
8. Additional materials.			
9. One-page summaries; one for each course completed.			
10. Copies of transcripts.			
11. Up-to-date and signed MAT program checklist.			
12. General assessment of student's progress based on portfolio.			

First Submission _____

Second Submission _____ _____

Third Submission _____

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